




City of Courtenay

Park and Donation Bench Guidelines



City of
Courtenay



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Park and Donation Bench Guidelines
Prepared by Lanarc
November 2025

The City of Courtenay respectfully
acknowledges that we are within the
unceded traditional territory of the
K'ómoks First Nation.





Existing City of Courtenay bench at Simms Park

Table of Contents

1 Overview & Background.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Classifications	1
1.3 Context.....	2
1.4 Implementation.....	2
2 Design Considerations.....	3
2.1 General Principles	3
2.2 Locating Benches	4
2.3 Accessibility	6
2.4 Sustainability.....	8
2.5 Maintenance	8
3 Furnishings Palette.....	9
3.1 Bench Styles.....	9
3.2 Installation	11
3.3 Associated Costs.....	11
4 Park Bench Donation Program.....	12
4.1 Typical Considerations	12
4.2 Donation Plaques	13
4.3 Case Study: Municipal Donation Programs.....	14
5 Potential Locations.....	15
5.1 Existing Bench Inventory	15
5.2 Park Classifications & Bench Placement.....	15
5.3 Community Parks	18
5.4 Neighbourhood Parks	20
5.5 Natural Parks	22
5.6 Linear Parks	24
6 Conclusion.....	26
6.1 Future Planning.....	26
Appendix A: References	A1

This document is intended to give direction related to benches within the City of Courtenay's parks and trails network. While benches in streetscape right-of-ways, schoolyards, other public-realm zones, and on private property will benefit from the information in this document, they are not explicitly covered by the *Park and Donation Bench Guidelines*.



Existing City of Courtenay bench at Lewis Park

1 | Overview & Background

The *Park and Donation Bench Guidelines* are a set of standards to guide the design, location, and installation of benches in municipal park and trail settings.

As the City of Courtenay continues to develop its park and trail network, well-designed and thoughtfully located benches will be a key component to the park system’s long-term success. The *Park and Donation Bench Guidelines* are based on best practices to provide a framework to inform park benches in general, as well as guidance for a benches utilized for future donation bench programs.

1.1 Introduction

Benches — as places to sit, to gather, and to rest — are important components in any park design.

Park bench guidelines provide guidance on style, location, and maintenance considerations. These guidelines typically address materials and aesthetics, accessibility, and durability to build a long-lasting inventory for a municipality. Guidelines also outline the procedures for selecting locations, so that benches are placed in areas that maximize their utility and enjoyment for the public.

Additionally, guidelines often include maintenance considerations to keep benches in good condition, contributing to the overall safety and attractiveness of parks. The upkeep of a significant number of benches across the City is a large ongoing task, so maintenance protocols that simplify needs and standardize approaches are fundamental to new park creation and ongoing operations and maintenance practices.

1.2 Classifications

Benches can be located in numerous spaces across a City, from parks to streetscapes; City-owned spaces to private parcels; trails to plazas. This document covers benches in City-owned parks and trails. Within these zones, two primary classifications of benches are a) general purpose benches, and b) benches that are part of a donation bench program.

General purpose benches are defined as any benches in a park or along a trail that are provided for seating or gathering. These can be of varying styles, and will often have a design suitable to the specific context of their location.

A donation bench is a specific offering as part of a municipal program that allows individuals to honor loved ones by dedicating a bench in their memory. Other types of dedications may honour a significant event or an organization. Typically, the program involves selecting a bench location, funding the bench and its installation (or using an existing one), and designing a personalized plaque. The dedication usually lasts for a set period, often with options for renewal. Donation bench programs not only enhance the park’s amenities but also create lasting commemorations that resonate with the community.

1.3 Context

Benches in Courtenay Today

The City of Courtenay parks network spans 183 hectares across 103 municipally owned parks (City of Courtenay, 2019). In this network there are numerous benches that have been installed over decades. Placed in response to new parkland creation as well as ongoing upgrades, these benches vary in terms of age, manufacturer, style, materials, and location. The City currently has a preferred bench model, however in the absence of established design guidelines, the implementation of the preferred bench has been inconsistent.

Memorial Bench Program

The City previously ran a Memorial Bench Program from 1997-2008. It was suspended as demand for benches exceeded availability, and at the time the program was not a financially sustainable service. Waiting lists were established in the following years to continue to track demand. In light of continued interest in the program, recommendations for a new donation bench program are currently being explored.

Related Planning Context

The City has developed several planning documents that guide the implementation of park and donation benches. The following documents, among others, have informed the recommendations in this report:

- Official Community Plan (2022)
- Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2019)
- Park Playground Design Standards (2024)

This document considers and carries forward ideas developed as part of these earlier processes.

1.4 Implementation

The *Park and Donation Bench Guidelines* are an integrated set of criteria for the placement of general purpose benches and donation benches in a City park and trail setting. The criteria cover general design principles that will apply to all City owned benches, providing guidance on spacing, proximity to park amenities, sun/shade levels, and other considerations. Best practices are also included to address where benches are recommended, as well as suggested spacing along trails/greenways. A proposed furnishings palette covers City-recommended benches for general use, and the guide considers accessibility, sustainability, life cycle considerations, and associated costs.

To guide the development of a donation bench program, specific requirements for benches are included, as well as an approach to the design of plaques and associated messages.



Existing City of Courtenay bench along the Courtenay River.

2 | Design Considerations

The design and placement of benches play a key role in the City’s parks and trails network.

The selection of benches in a park or trail setting will contribute to the look, feel, and use of the space. While considering function and aesthetics, many criteria can be weighed and balanced. The considerations in this section are intended to guide the design and placement of benches.

2.1 General Principles

The following summary outlines best practices derived from a review of established guidelines and recommendations.

Allow for Flexibility

A successful parks and trails guideline document recognizes the variety of locations benches can be located in and allows for different models catering to the specific needs of the area. Rather than specifying one bench type for the entire park system, successful guidelines often allow for choices that reflect a range of design characteristics so that bench designs will align with the character of a park or trail. For example, a different bench might be chosen for a forested nature park than an urban park. To reinforce this:

- Materials, colours, and style of a bench is to complement the surrounding park or trails context.
- Benches are to fit proportionally within their chosen location, responding to clearance requirements and other built elements.

Plan for Socialization

Integrate bench types and locations that promote social gathering, including the following considerations:

- Consider small groupings where possible to create nodes of seating, however do not cluster all seating in one zone (which could lead to congestion).
- Place benches adjacent to active uses — a bench next to a playground is an opportunity for caregivers to socialize.
- Remember that benches are also places to passively take part in a larger space. Placed around the periphery of a plaza, they might allow access to socializing (in ways that isolated locations wouldn’t).

Create Safe Spaces

To safely attract users, integrate the following best practices when identifying bench locations:

- Place benches in well lit, visible locations.
- Allow for clear lines of site to and from the location of nearby exits or egress paths.
- Provide an adequate buffer to risks such as busy thoroughfares or steep slopes.

●● *Bench-space allows people to loosely belong within the flow of city life, to see and be seen.*
(Bynon, R., and Rishbeth, C. 2015)



2.2 Locating Benches

Where benches are placed has as much impact on their usage as their design. Placement can vary widely based on park type, level of intensity, and character of nearby amenities. In general, benches can be located at key areas of a park, and along popular trails, near playgrounds, and by other recreational amenities to maximize their use.

Preferred Locations

The layout and design of the City's parks and trails network means that the specific criteria for locating benches will vary based on context. Each park and trail design will be carefully considered to inform furnishing placement, however the following criteria provide a starting point when choosing where to place new items:

- Locate benches near major entry / exit points from a park or trail.
- Pair benches with other focal park amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, or covered shelters.
- Place benches where users can view a larger space, providing "eyes on the street," and increasing safety for a given area.
- Create social nodes by placing numerous seating options in key areas of a park.
- Place benches in visible locations to deter vandalism and encourage use.
- Locate benches to take advantage of key views.

Spacing

As one component among a larger furnishing palette, benches will generally occupy space in relationship to other park/trail elements. To ensure benches are easily accessed, the following spacing requirements are to be considered:

- Benches generally require a min. 0.6m offset from adjacent elements.
- Provide a clear space of 1.5m to approach from the front.
- Provide an offset of min. 1m from the central leader of a tree.
- Maintain a distance of 0.6m from above ground utility kiosks, 1.8m from fire hydrants, and 0.6m from the side of building fire connections.
- Offset min. 0.3m from a building or wall to the rear of the bench.
- Refer to Section "2.3 Accessibility" for guidelines on spacing related to universal design.

Microclimate

As weather shifts throughout the day, week, and year, users change their seating preferences to gain access to more or less sun, rain, wind, or other microclimate conditions. To allow for changing needs, consider the following when placing benches:

- Locations are to consider climatic conditions for user comfort. When possible, locate benches in a variety of aspects to take advantage of both sun and shade throughout the day and year.
- Provide seating options in multiple orientations to catch/avoid different sun angles.
- Provide benches in full sun locations for winter seating and in shaded zones for hot summer days.
- In general, benches are to be sheltered from the direction of prevailing wind.
- Provide cover over benches where appropriate (e.g., under picnic shelters, building overhangs).

Quantity

The approach to the number of benches per park or trail will vary based on park usage, urban or rural character, nearby program types, and other factors. The following guidelines can be considered (quantities for each park or trail to be determined on a case-by-case basis based on site characteristics):

- Providing a set guide to the number of benches per area of park or playground space is not generally a recommended approach. However, some municipalities have developed suggested guidelines to streamline review processes. In these instances the recommendation is one bench per 1,500 m² of park area, adjusted as needed based on site-specific factors (City of Edmonton, 2025). If used, quantities generated should be carefully analysed for suitability for the park/trail in question.
- Rest and seating opportunities can be placed evenly to provide seating across a park space as well as along a trail (refer to Section “2.3 Accessibility” for further information on this metric related to universal design).
- Seating is to be provided for a minimum of two people at any location (a bench is generally 2-3 seating spaces, and a picnic table 4-6 spaces).
- Multiple smaller benches in a variety of configurations is generally preferable to one large bench.
- Increase the number of benches in urban areas, and reduce them in quieter, natural settings.
- Note programs that generally attract large numbers of users at one time — such as playgrounds — and increase bench numbers in those locations.



Bench placement celebrates key views of a waterfront.



Paired with play amenities, benches support supervision of play.



Benches in sun and shade provide year-round comfort.

2.3 Accessibility

Benches and seating options should be designed to consider the diverse needs of all individuals to provide equal access to public spaces and minimize barriers for use.

The City of Courtenay is committed to these aims, and in 2023 joined with other local governments in the Comox Valley — the Town of Comox, the Village of Cumberland, and the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) — to form the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee (CVAC) to further this goal.

These commitments are also supported through other resources. The 2024 British Columbia Building Code includes a wide range of accessibility requirements that primarily apply to indoor spaces and their egress routes, but that can also provide best practice methods in outdoor situations (BC, 2024). Private nonprofit organizations like the Rick Hansen Foundation also offer guiding documents (RHF 2024). In addition, the Accessible British Columbia Act (ABCA) was passed in 2021 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility so that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of society.

The following guidelines are based on these and other resources to present an overview of accessibility best practices as they relate to bench design and placement. They are not an exhaustive review of all accessibility tenets, however, and final site design and construction practices may need to respond to other factors. For further information, additional resources are listed in Appendix A.

Placement

Before any item of furnishing can accommodate a user with mobility challenges, a clear and usable path of travel needs to exist between it and other elements in a park or trail. To guide this need, bench placement will:

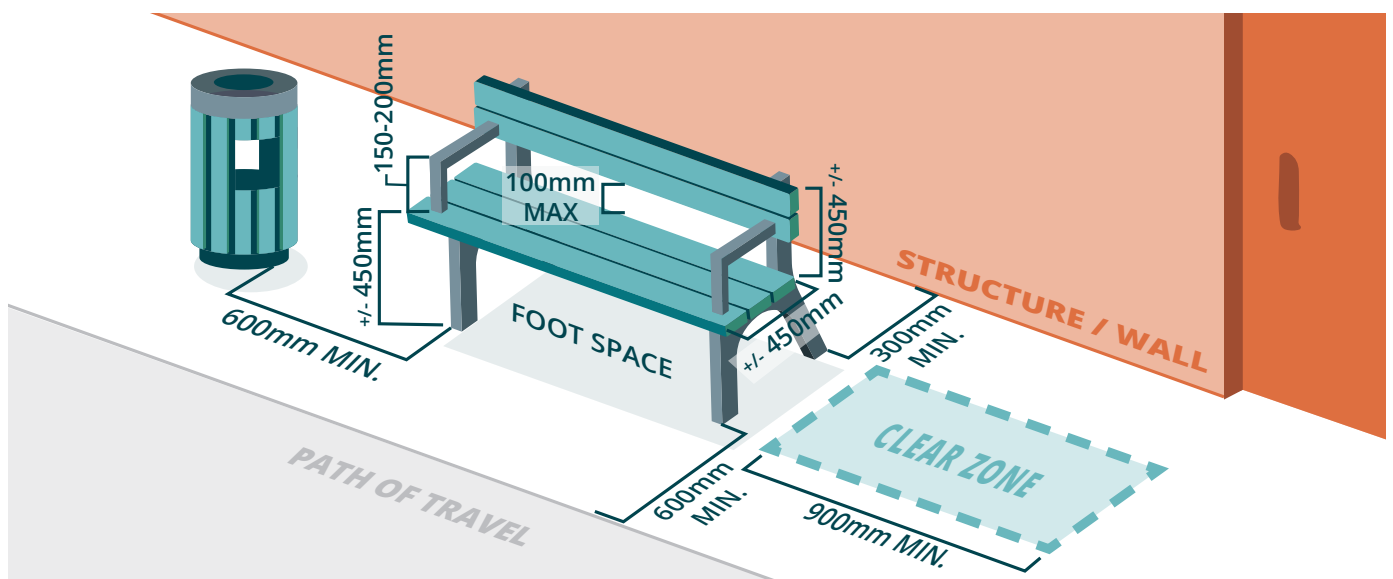
- Connect to the rest of the park or trail along an accessible pathway.
- Be spaced to allow for sufficient stops to rest for users with lower mobility. In high-traffic urban setting this is generally noted as no more than 50 meters. However in trail settings this bench spacing would be too frequent, and benches at the start of a trail and the halfway point (along with key moments of interest) are common.
- Be placed on firm, slip resistant, and level surfaces that allow those seated to be outside the adjacent path of travel.
- Be oriented perpendicular to the path of travel.
- Have a setback of min. 600mm from the path of travel.
- Have a clear ground space on at least one side (outside of the path of travel) that is 900mm wide. This allows for a wheelchair or other mobility device to be parked next to the bench and to aid in sitting/standing.
- Not be obstructed by other furnishing or park elements located in close proximity.
- Be clear from growth of adjacent vegetation that might limit access to the bench.

💡 *Having a variety of seating options is important to cater for a broad range of people with different needs – there is no single seat or single seat location that will work for everyone.* (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2024) 💡

Bench Design

The physical design of a bench that caters to a wide range of individuals is to consider accessibility, comfort, and inclusivity. Key characteristics include:

- **Height and Depth:** Provide a seating space that is +/- 450mm high and min. 450mm wide/deep.
- **Back Support:** Include a back support (nominally extending +/- 450mm above the seat).
- **Seat Surface:** A seat surface set level to +/- 5 degrees from the horizontal.
- **Armrests:** Include armrests to aid in standing/sitting, nom. 150-200mm above the seat height. Armrests can also hinder the use of a seat for those that need to recline, so can be provided on one side of a bench or omitted on some benches in a cluster.
- **Space Below:** Has space under the bench to allow users to lean forward when standing up from resting position.
- **Seat to Backrest Gap:** Include a seat to backrest gap of no more than 100mm.
- **Rounded Corners:** All corners are to be generally rounded, with no sharp edges or hardware connection points.
- **Thermal Properties:** Be designed of a material with comfortable thermal properties (does not get too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter).
- **Drainage:** Has a surface design that sheds water.
- **User Comfort:** 'Hostile architecture' refers to design features that intentionally discourage people from sitting, lying down, or lingering. While this is a strategy that has been employed in the past to prevent unwanted usage of benches, this strategy is now generally considered to be unwelcoming and is not to be considered.



Design requirements for a typical accessible friendly bench.

2.4 Sustainability

The sustainable provision of benches is based on a few key considerations. Choice of materials, longevity of the furnishings, and the overall life-cycle of the product from manufacturing to decommissioning can guide sustainable choices.

Materials

Strategies for prioritizing sustainable materials include:

- When choosing wood, look for sustainable harvest certifications, domestically sourced products, or techniques that increase the durability of fast-growing species. Favor unfinished or naturally weathering wood over chemical coatings.
- Recycled plastic benches offer cost-conscious, sustainable alternatives that divert waste from landfills.
- Powder coating treatments can extend the life of bench frames.

Life Cycle

Many manufacturers now include 'cradle to grave' information for a variety of their furnishings to guide low-carbon choices:

- Select bench materials with low environmental impact across their entire life cycle, prioritizing recycled content and recyclability to minimize resource depletion and waste.
- Choose higher quality products with increased durability and a long product lifespan translate to reduced environmental footprints.
- Plan for end-of-life by specifying benches that can be easily disassembled and recycled or repurposed.

2.5 Maintenance

Planning with a maintenance strategy in mind can guide initial design considerations and product selection. Effective maintenance will be essential to maximize the lifespan, safety, and appearance of park benches while minimizing long-term costs. When choosing benches, consider the following:

- Select benches that are easy to maintain and have modular parts. The ability to replace seating/backrest slats while keeping the frame is of particular importance.
- Choose materials based on durability, weather resistance, and ease of maintenance.
- When surface mounting benches, use tamper-resistant bolts to reduce the likelihood of theft or vandalism.
- Consider anti-graffiti treatments and UV-resistant finishes to prolong the life of benches in vandalism-prone areas.
- Perform regular inspections (twice annually) for seasonal maintenance. For park spaces subjected to higher levels of weathering (such as seaside locations) or vandalism, quarterly inspections may be warranted. For benches in these areas, consider higher-durability marine-grade materials to reduce overall upkeep and replacement.
- Plan for ongoing maintenance costs and incorporate them into budgeting to ensure benches remain safe, attractive, and functional for park users over time.

3 | Furnishings Palette

A cohesive set of furnishings will establish a unified look and feel across the City’s park network.

The considerations in the previous section established a set of guidelines for bench placement, design, and associated requirements. The furnishings listed in this section meet these requirements, and have been provided as a starting point for bench selection across the City. They are meant as a foundation to establish consistent character, quality, and approach across the City’s park and trail network.

3.1 Bench Styles

As the City’s park and trail network continues to evolve, a range of furnishing styles will be required for a variety of applications. This section includes different choices, which meet the requirements of Section 2. Each bench is provided with a summary of its identifying information including name, materials, finish selections, manufacturer, and other relevant information.

To allow for future flexibility, these benches are meant as a initial toolkit to choose from, with the understanding that future park upgrades may necessitate a broader range of bench types. Other benches should be seen as a possibility. As new benches are selected, care to be taken that they meet the preceding section’s requirements.

Bench Style 1

The current bench standard utilized by the City is contemporary in style, with a focus on value and ease of maintenance.

Product Name: BayView Bench

Product Style: 6 ft with armrests (BV-6)

Materials: Aluminum Frame
& 100% Recycled Plastic Slats

Colour / Finish: ‘Carbon Black’ Powdercoat Frame & ‘Sand’ Slats

Dimensions: 72" / 1829mm width

Manufacturer: Wishbone Site Furnishings

Cost: \$1,840 (excl. tax + shipping)

Notes: An alternate option for the bench slats is ‘Accoya® Modified Wood Natural.’ Use this sustainable selection when a higher-quality furnishing is required, or where wood is desired to match the design context of an area.

The frame’s powdercoat colour can be varied to match other furnishing elements in a park setting.



Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

Donation Benches

For a Donation Bench program, Bench Style 1 offers the best value and flexibility and will be used for new installations. Refer to Section 4 for further Donation Bench guidelines.

Bench Style 2

For high-profile or urban spaces, this selection provides an elevated, contemporary aesthetic while still allowing for ease of maintenance.

Product Name: NeoLiviano Bench

Product Style: 6 ft, backed, with armrests

Materials: Aluminum Frame
& 100% Recycled Plastic Slats

Colour / Finish: Anodized Aluminum Frame &
'Bark' Polysite Slats

Dimensions: 69" / 1750mm width

Manufacturer: Landscape Forms

Cost: \$2,700 (excl. tax + shipping)

Notes: Longer options, backless variants, and a chair style are offered for more design flexibility if required.

An alternate option for the bench slats is 'Domestically Sourced Thermally Modified Ash.' Use this sustainable selection when a higher-quality furnishing is required, or where wood is desired to match the design context of an area.



Source: Landscape Forms

Alternate Seating Options

Benches function as a social resource, and other seating formats reinforce this. Consider alternate styles to foster gathering or offer a unique furnishing moment. The examples below are provided as starting points but other options can be considered.



Built-In Benches

Source: Forms + Surfaces



Large Format Benches

Source: Landscape Forms



Single Chair Elements

Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

3.2 Installation

Benches are to generally be installed on level surfaces conforming to the accessibility requirements in Section 2. In most instances these will be a concrete pad or a compacted granular zone. The dimensions of each mounting pad are to account for the spatial requirements and offset distances of the chosen bench, as well as allow for additional space for wheelchair users to the sides and front.

When installing onto concrete pads, surface mounting allows for the greatest flexibility in the long term. Embed mounts are to only be used in high-profile urban locations where a cleaner installation aesthetic is required and the position of benches is unlikely to change.

Where multiple benches or furnishings will be grouped together, one concrete pad can be sized to accommodate all of the furnishings including their clear zones.

Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions, and where possible utilize tamper-proof, corrosion resistant hardware to reduce the risk of vandalism and ongoing maintenance needs.



A surface mounted bench in a hardscape setting.

3.3 Associated Costs

The costs associated with a bench's installation will vary depending on location, site preparation requirements, style of bench, and supporting pad. To give a general overview of anticipated associated costs, applicable examples (in Canadian dollars) are included below. These will vary over time, and updated costing can be requested from contractors before new installations occur.

- **Concrete Pad (Supply/Install):**
 - Labour: \$300 (staff time = 6 hrs.)
 - Materials: \$400
- **Donation Plaque:** \$705
- **Maintenance:**
 - Pressure Washing: \$500 (staff time = 1 hr. x 1 time per year for 10 years)
 - Graffiti Removal: \$500 (staff time = 1 hr. x 1 time per year for 10 years)
- **Associated Program Administrative Costs:** \$900 (staff time = 20 hrs. over the life of a bench)



A poured-in-place concrete pad provided for a bench installation.

4 | Park Bench Donation Program

Donation benches are a special category of park bench, utilized as a form of remembrance.

Bench donation programs have their own guidelines and are often independent of general park bench replacements/upgrades. While many of the factors provided in the previous sections will be relevant (including bench design, maintenance, and costs), there are a number of additional factors that need to be considered. This section provides a brief overview of these considerations.

4.1 Typical Considerations

The selection of furnishings for a donation bench program can be similar to a standard park bench program. There are a number of additional considerations related to the format of the program that can be followed:

- If a program intends to provide new benches to be purchased by the user, the selection of the bench type is to be undertaken with a reasonable cost in mind. High-value benches can limit participation rates by making the price of entry too steep.
- If a program intends to provide a selection of existing benches for users to choose from, the benches in the park network will need to allow for the easy addition of a plaque (see Section 4.2 Donation Plaques).
- A typical donation bench program lasts for 10 - 15 years, so the lifespan of a donation bench should meet this timescale.
- Benches are to be easy to maintain to continue to meet a high aesthetic standard.

Bench Style 1 (Section 3) is a highly suitable bench type, and can be adapted into a donation bench through the addition of commemorative plaques. Any park bench location can also be utilized for a donation bench, and as additional benches are placed the program can be expanded as needed.



An existing City of Courtenay donation bench from a previously run program. The new program will standardize the style and materials for future donation benches.



Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

An example of *Bench Style 1* as a donation bench.

4.2 Donation Plaques

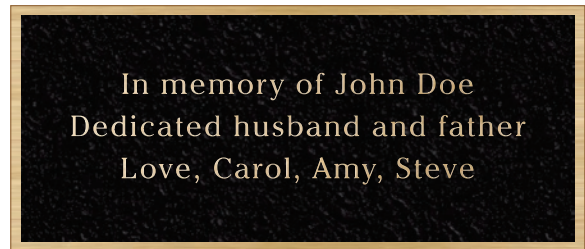
A donation bench is generally chosen for a location that has a scenic or personal connection to the bereaved. The bench is then customized through the use of a commemorative plaque which contains a short message. These are often simple signage elements made of bronze or another high-quality material. They can be affixed to new benches as well as retroactively installed on existing benches.

Depending on the style of bench, spatial requirements, or level of detail, a message can take many different forms. Based on research into local examples and best practices, it is recommended that the following criteria be applied to the design of donation plaques:

- **Size:** A 75 x 200mm (nom. 3" x 8") plaque is a standard size that can be set into a single typical 2x4 bench slat.
- **Text:** Each plaque includes 3 or 4 lines of words, with 38 characters (incl. spaces) per line.
- **Materials:** Each plaque is custom-made of a high-quality material like bronze by a local foundry.
- **Installation:** The plaque is attached to a single one of the slats of the backrest of the bench, inset for a higher quality installation approach.

The manufacturer of *Bench Style 1* offers Custom Bronze Plaques that can be preinstalled on new benches. Other local foundries also offer a range of styles and sizes based on specific requirements.

7" Wide x 3" High – 3 Line Layout Example



Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

An example donation plaque including text style and spacing.



Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

An inset plaque is shown installed into a single board.



Source: Wishbone Site Furnishings

A donation bench next to a walking path.

4.3 Case Study: Municipal Donation Programs

Benches are often part of a larger municipal donation program.

While this document is focused on bench guidelines, how benches fit into a wider program was researched to inform recommendations. Below is a brief overview of select programs from two example British Columbia municipalities, including overall approach and program features. They were chosen for their population (size comparable to Courtenay) or due to their success as an ongoing program.

City of Penticton

The City of Penticton's Parks Donation Program offers an opportunity for individuals or organizations to contribute to the enhancement of public spaces through personalized donations. Through this program, donors can sponsor a park bench, picnic table, bike rack, pet-bag stand, or tree planting. Additional ways to remember a loved one are also provided — donating to park improvement projects, hanging basket sponsorships, floral displays, or park stewardship programs.

- A defined term of 15-years is provided initially, renewable once for an additional 10-years.
- The majority are in parks, however some city-owned public spaces, such as libraries, are also included.
- Existing furnishing items are utilized, allowing donors to dedicate benches already within a park space.
- The cost is \$2,899 for an initial 15-year term per bench; renewals for the 10-year period are available at half the original cost.
- Donors must consult with staff to confirm available locations before applying, and the City has an online map that showcases available locations.
- Plaques are returned to donors if not renewed, and the City requests all donors keep their contact information current. If a donor is unreachable within three months prior to the end of the donation period, the plaque will be removed and kept for up to one year.

City of Port Moody

The City of Port Moody's Memory Program is a joint initiative with the Port Moody Foundation, and allows individuals, businesses or organizations to donate funds to enhance parks, trails, or buildings. It is advertised as a flexible program that in addition to commemorations of deceased loved ones can also be used to remember occasions, birthdays, anniversaries, or other notable events. The program lists park benches and picnic tables as the main items for donation, however these are noted as partial lists; residents are encouraged to suggest unique ideas if desired.

- Donated items are maintained by the City for 10-years.
- New furnishing elements are utilized.
- The cost for a bench is \$4,000 for a new 10-year term, and includes cost of the base, a new bench, a plaque, and 10 years maintenance. At the end of the donation period, the plaque will be removed and kept for up to one year.
- Donors need to contact staff to discuss locations, and no online map is available. The website notes that there are waitlists for high-profile park locations.
- The program includes benches within designated parks, but not those in urban plazas, along streets, or along high-profile multi-use paths.

5 | Potential Locations

A desktop review of existing bench locations within the City was conducted to identify priority areas for new bench installations.

Over the coming years new benches will be added throughout the City's parks and trails network. To assist the identification of priority areas for installations, the existing park bench inventory was examined at a City-wide scale. This has led to findings which show some regions in the City as under-served. This section notes these areas, and provides specific bench placement guidelines for each of the City's park classification types.

5.1 Existing Bench Inventory

The City of Courtenay's current bench inventory is illustrated in *Map A* on the following page. Benches in park spaces have been mapped, are located along with select locations associated with City streets. This current-state snapshot shows the majority of existing benches along the Courtenay River, in feature locations such as Lewis Park or Simms Park, and generally associated with areas in central Courtenay.

Based on this assessment, *Map B* illustrates zones within Western, Southern, and Eastern Courtenay that are under-served in terms of number of benches relative to size/population of area. These zones may include areas of recent residential development (e.g. the Southern extents), or they may be areas that are relatively under-served by parks as a whole. These three underserved areas should be priority locations for new bench installations.

“Benches improve the accessibility and enjoyment of existing parks and trails, especially when placed in attractive locations, near playground and other amenities, and under shade trees. As the population grows and use increases, more benches will be needed.”
(City of Courtenay. 2019)

5.2 Park Classifications & Bench Placement

Each of the areas noted as under-served for benches in Section 4.1 contain a variety of park types defined by the City's 'Parkland Classification' system as outlined in the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The 'Parkland Classification' system categorized parks according to five major types. The following four types will continue to support existing and new City benches:

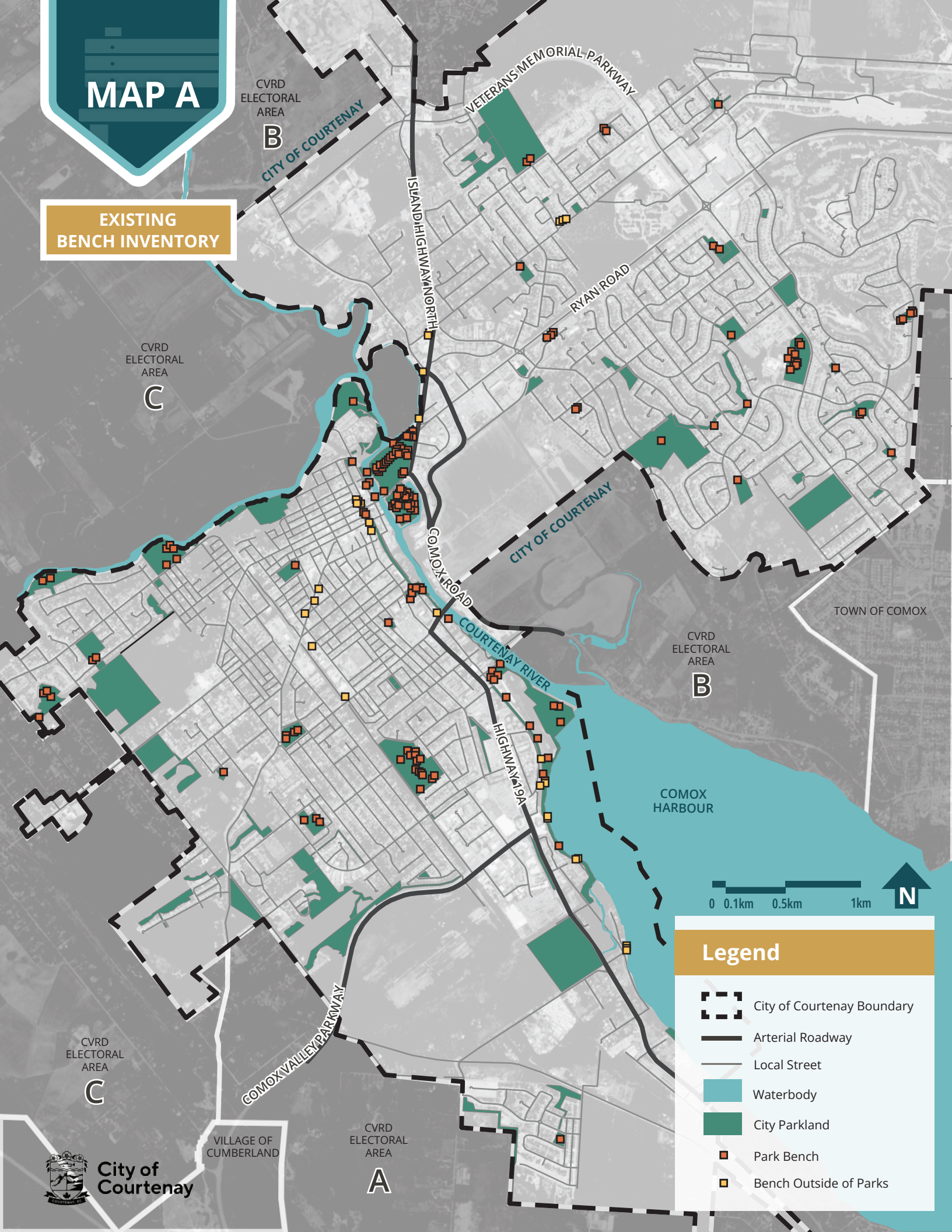
- Community Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Natural Parks
- Linear Parks

The fifth type — 'Greenspaces' — do not have significant amenities or trails and would not be a focus for new bench placement. Other lands with park values such as school sites are similarly not covered in this document.








To illustrate how benches can be placed in each park type, a representative illustration of each class of park is provided on the following pages. These park types will share similarities across the City, and the examples provided can act as a guide for placing benches in other parks of that category.

MAP A

EXISTING BENCH INVENTORY

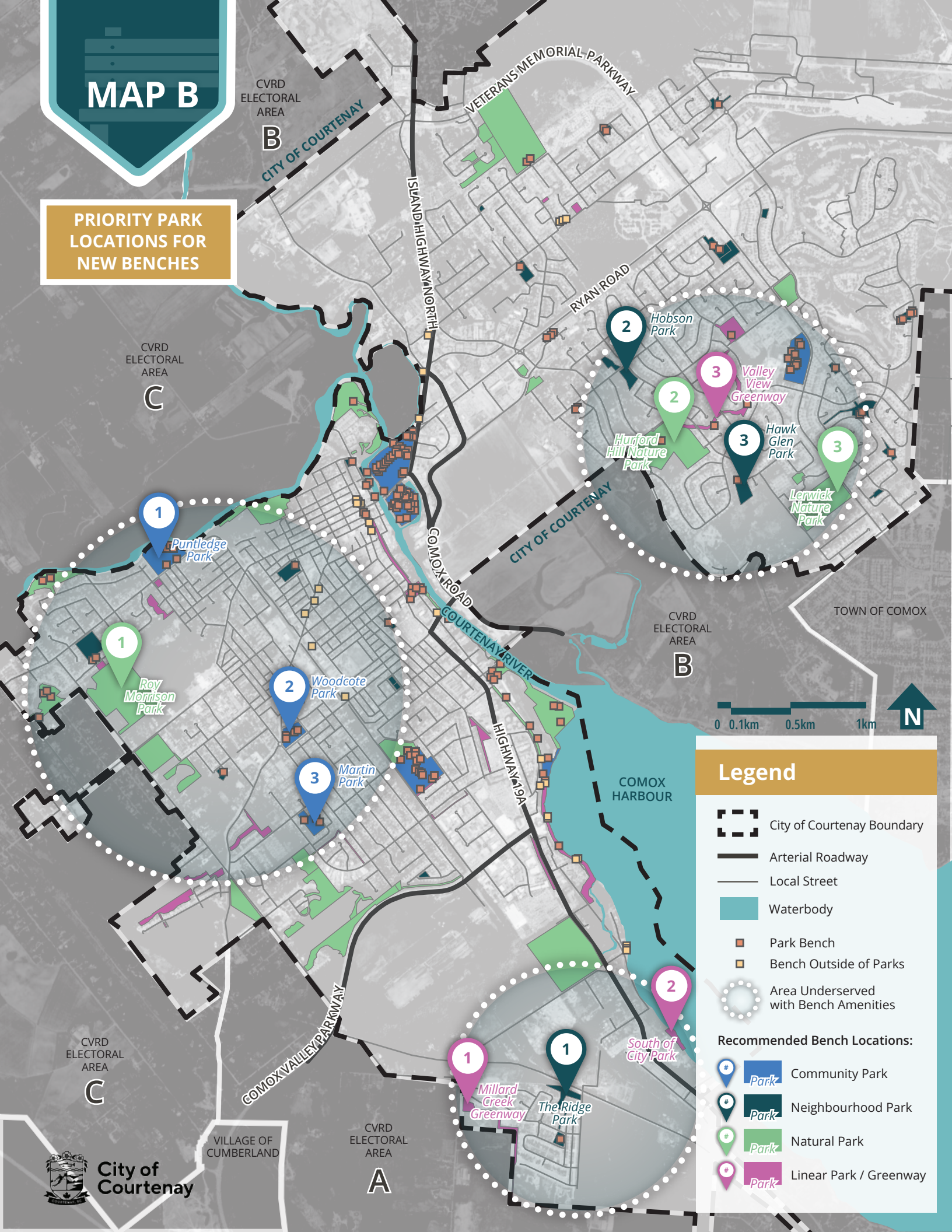


Legend

-  City of Courtenay Boundary
-  Arterial Roadway
-  Local Street
-  Waterbody
-  City Parkland
-  Park Bench
-  Bench Outside of Parks

MAP B

PRIORITY PARK LOCATIONS FOR NEW BENCHES



Legend

- City of Courtenay Boundary
- Arterial Roadway
- Local Street
- Waterbody
- Park Bench
- Bench Outside of Parks
- Area Underserved with Bench Amenities

Recommended Bench Locations:

- Park* Community Park
- Park* Neighbourhood Park
- Park* Natural Park
- Park* Linear Park / Greenway

5.3 Community Parks

Community Parks are major destinations that serve residents from the entire City and wider region. Lewis Park was chosen as an example Community Park, with potential bench locations noted in *Map C* to the right. These have been organized around the following important moments.

Entry Points

Entries are where those arriving by foot, bike, or transit will first interact with a park. In a Community Park, these will often be adjacent to a major street, align with a City-wide trail network, or be adjacent to transit. Ensure benches are located to allow for rest upon arrival, or a convenient place to wait.

Parking

As a City-wide or regional destination, Community Parks are accessed via private vehicle for many visitors. Similar to Entry Points, parking areas are to be treated as arrival spaces, and benches can be provided.

Major Amenities

The draw of Community Parks are the important amenities they provide, including baseball diamonds or sport court hubs. Provide benches adjacent to these amenities for spectators or those waiting their turn to play. For some sports, like baseball, seating may already be provided in alternate forms (e.g. bleachers) that will influence where benches are needed.

Walking Trails

Where regional trails pass through a Community Park, provide places to rest along the route. As Community Parks have higher visitor numbers, bench spacing can be more frequent than along rural trails. Consider spacing that complements resting needs for users with lower mobility (refer to Section 2.3).

Key Views

Community Parks are often adjacent to scenic areas or important City-wide features. Benches can be placed to take advantage of important views, and will often complement other locations along a trail or adjacent to other important amenities.



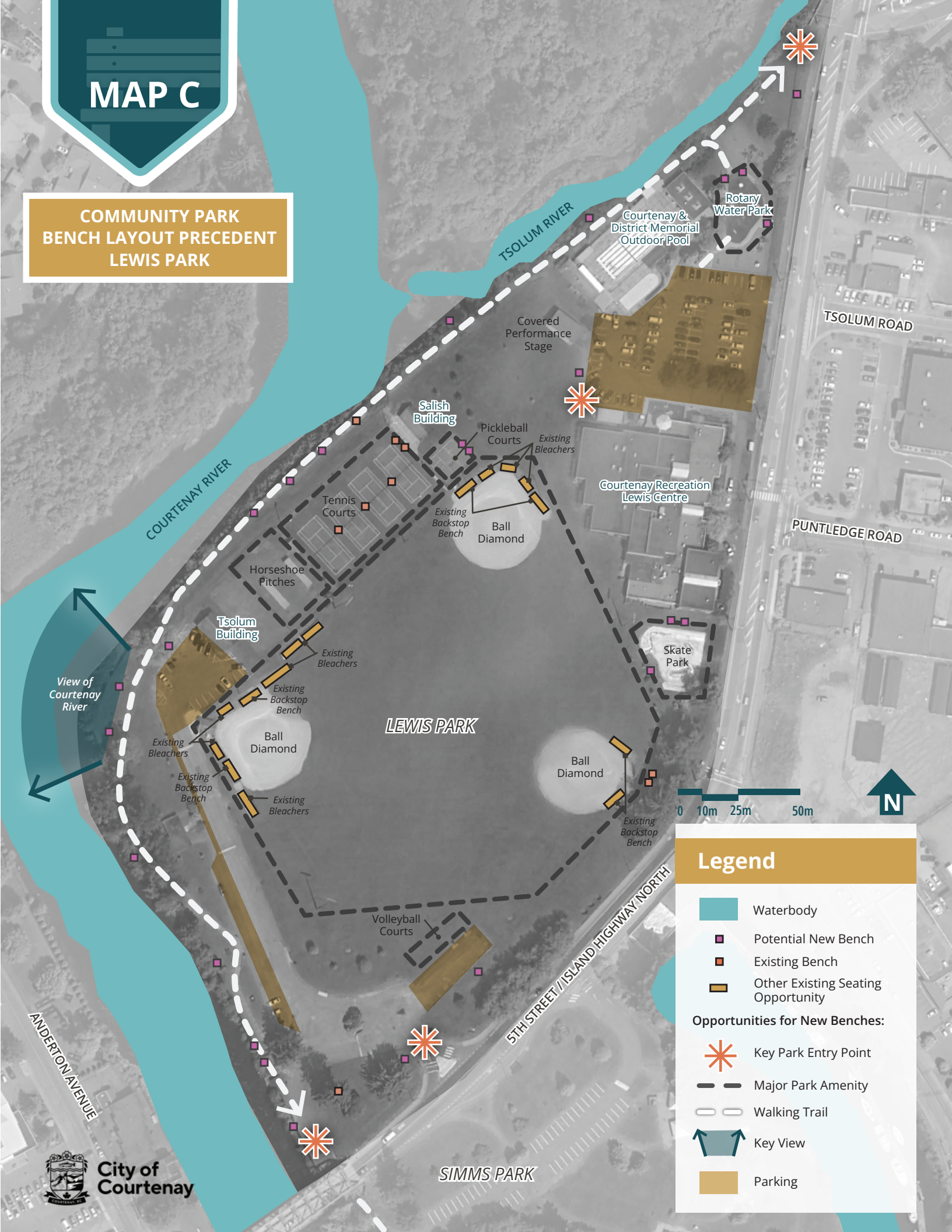
An existing bench along the riverside walking trail.



An existing bench adjacent to the tennis courts.

MAP C

COMMUNITY PARK BENCH LAYOUT PRECEDENT LEWIS PARK



Legend

- Waterbody
- Potential New Bench
- Existing Bench
- Other Existing Seating Opportunity

Opportunities for New Benches:

- Key Park Entry Point
- Major Park Amenity
- Walking Trail
- Key View
- Parking

ANDERTON AVENUE



SIMMS PARK

5TH STREET / ISLAND HIGHWAY NORTH

PUNTLIDGE ROAD

TSOLUM ROAD

COURTENAY RIVER

TSOLUM RIVER

LEWIS PARK

Courtenay & District Memorial Outdoor Pool

Rotary Water Park

Covered Performance Stage

Salish Building

Pickleball Courts

Existing Bleachers

Courtenay Recreation Lewis Centre

Existing Backstop Bench

Ball Diamond

Tennis Courts

Horseshoe Pitches

Tsolum Building

Existing Bleachers

Existing Backstop Bench

Ball Diamond

Existing Bleachers

Existing Backstop Bench

Existing Bleachers

Ball Diamond

Existing Backstop Bench

Existing Backstop Bench

Volleyball Courts

Skate Park

View of Courtenay River

5.4 Neighbourhood Parks

Neighbourhood Parks serve specific subregions within the City, relating to a zone of residential housing similar in size and draw to an elementary school's catchment. The Ridge Park is illustrated at right as an example of a Neighbourhood Park within a part of the City under-served by benches.

Entry Points

Entries into a Neighbourhood Park can be highly visible moments or smaller connections into the surrounding streetscape network. Benches in proximity to larger entry plazas are important, but smaller linkages can also be subtly emphasized through the addition of a bench.

Parking

Neighbourhood Parks often rely less on arrival by vehicle than Community Parks — and often parking is in the form of streetside spaces. Place benches adjacent to larger bays of parking, but proximity to every possible parking zone is not required.

Major Amenities

Play equipment, recreational/athletic amenities, and open grass form the basis of the major amenities Neighbourhood Parks provide for their surrounding areas. Locate benches in a suitable quantity to serve these and provide places for rest or socialization.

Walking Trails

The walking trail connections in a Neighbourhood Park are typically more local in nature, and are closely related to Greenways. Benches can be placed as resting moments along these pathways as well as at key entry and exit points.

Key Views

As key green spaces in wider residential areas, the views within a Neighbourhood Park will often be internal and focused on a feature of the park itself. Provide benches that allow for these to be enjoyed, as well as benches that allow residents to relax in the park or enjoy people watching.



Additional seating placed by users adjacent to the one bench at the playground (indicating the need for further seating).



Benches could be placed to take advantage of views to the stormwater pond.

MAP D

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK
BENCH LAYOUT PRECEDENT
THE RIDGE PARK



Legend

Opportunities for New Benches:

- Potential New Bench
- Existing Bench
- Other Existing Seating Opportunity

Existing Features:

- ✱ Major Park Entry Point
- ✱ Minor Park Entry Point
- Major Park Amenity
- Walking Trail
- ↔ Key View
- Parking
- Waterbody

5.5 Natural Parks

Natural Parks are areas within the City designated as parkland and comprised primarily of forests, watercourses, and/or open, unprogrammed green space. Hurford Hill Nature Park — illustrated at right — is an example of a Natural Park located within a residential neighbourhood that has limited existing benches.

Trailheads

Natural Parks can be located within residential neighbourhoods or adjacent to larger, regional greenspace areas. Access is typically provided through trailheads that link users into the walking pathways within the park. As places to both enter as well as primary meeting points for the park, benches in these locations can serve a variety of uses. Place a bench adjacent to each trailhead to signify that the pathway is an official access into the park and provide a place to wait and rest.

Walking Trails

The walking trails in a Natural Park are the primary amenity provided for users, popular for exercise, nature appreciation, and travel between areas within a neighbourhood. Benches can be provided along these pathways, however the reduced number of visitors compared to trails in a Community Park are to be accounted for. In a Natural Park, the number of benches often can be reduced to entry, exit, and midway points to start, with additional benches provided as a supplement if desired.

Key Views

Views in a Natural Park form a primary draw for users as places for nature appreciation. Provide benches adjacent to key moments where stopping and resting to enjoy a vantage point would be appreciated.



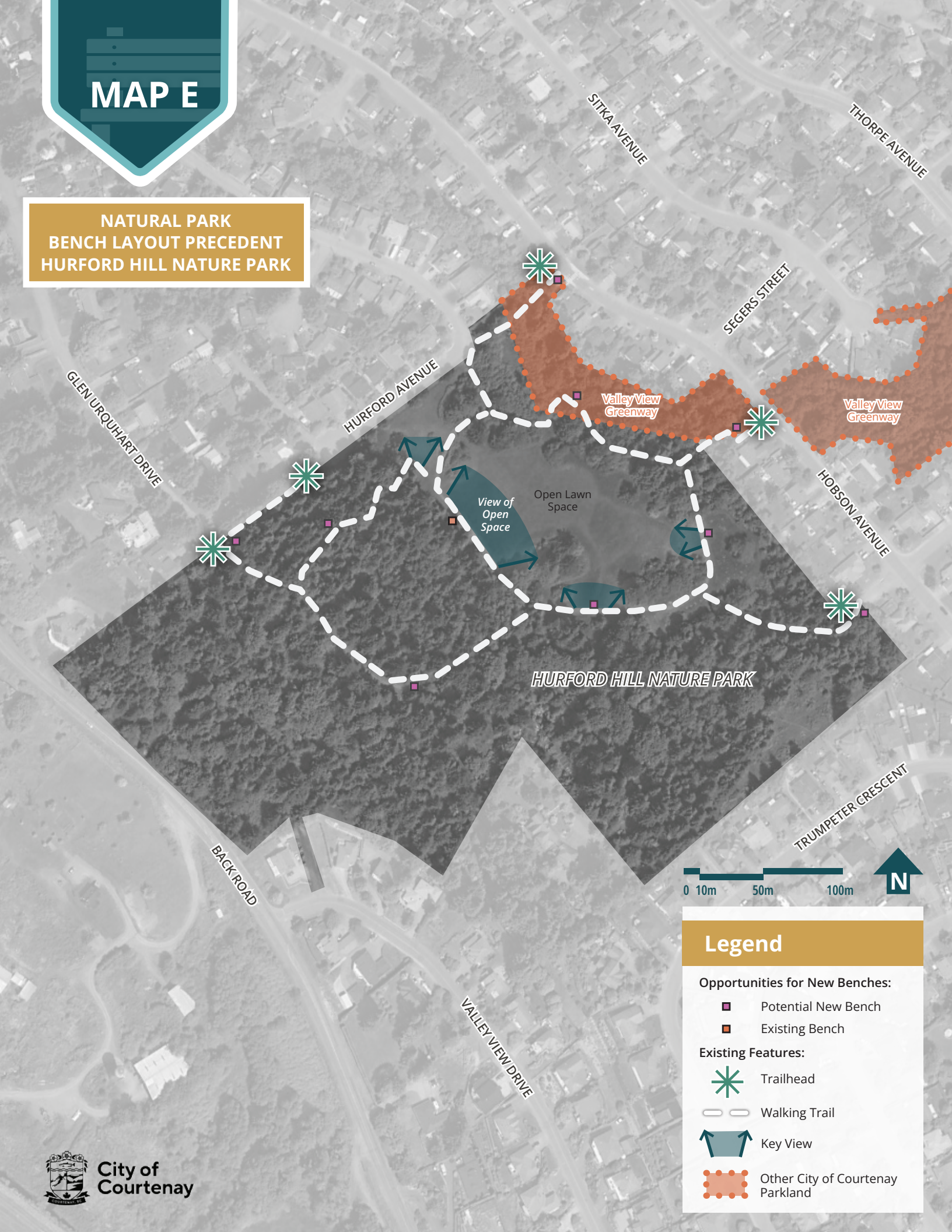
A bench could be placed adjacent to the park's entry point.



The central open lawn space could accommodate additional benches around the periphery.

MAP E

NATURAL PARK BENCH LAYOUT PRECEDENT HURFORD HILL NATURE PARK



Legend

Opportunities for New Benches:

- Potential New Bench
- Existing Bench

Existing Features:

- Trailhead
- Walking Trail
- Key View
- Other City of Courtenay Parkland

5.6 Linear Parks

Linear Parks are parkland within the City provided for the purpose of creating a trail through a natural or semi-natural setting. The Courtenay Greenway shown at right connects various neighbourhoods to the natural area of Cousins Park, and new benches could be placed along its route.

Entry Points

Entries into a Linear Park can be similar to the informal trailheads of a Natural Park, or they can be more structured entrances where the Linear Park ties into a Neighbourhood Park. In either instance, benches can be located as places for rest, as gathering zones, or simply to mark an official trail access point.

Walking Trails

The heart of a Linear Park is its walking trail, and by their nature these will be contained in narrow corridors of a natural or semi-natural setting. Placement of benches along these trails can start with entry, exit, and midway points. Additional benches can be provided at places where a trail splits, an interesting feature occurs (such as a bridge), or at key views (see below).

Key Views

The views within Linear Parks can vary widely. Each park can be analysed to determine where unique vantage points to surrounding rural or urban scenes are located. At these locations a bench can be placed to allow users to stop and rest while enjoying the view.



The entry point from Cousins Avenue could accommodate a seating node.



Places where the trail emerges into wider open spaces with a view would be good locations to incorporate seating.

MAP F

LINEAR PARK BENCH LAYOUT PRECEDENT COURTENAY GREENWAY & COUSINS PARK



Legend

Opportunities for New Benches:

- Potential New Bench

Existing Features:

- ★ Major Greenway Entry
- ★ Minor Greenway Entry
- Walking Trail
- ▤ Footbridge
- ↔ Key View
- Waterbody
- Other City of Courtenay Parkland

6 | Conclusion

The *Park and Donation Bench Guidelines* can continue to evolve as park needs change in the future.

The City of Courtenay has a well developed parks and trails system with many benches already present. This document seeks to establish design guidelines to aid the consistent implementation of benches into the future. It is, however, a starting point — as the City’s parks and trail network expands, and a Donation Program is created, it is anticipated that the needs associated with benches may be reevaluated.

6.1 Future Planning

The recommendations in this report outline a set of standards that will guide future bench procurement and placement. These recommendations will be carried out as new parks and trails are introduced to the system or new benches are procured to replace or augment existing ones. For this reason, the implementation of the recommendations is to be seen as a multi-year initiative based on community priorities and available City resources.

Other considerations include governance and policy implications, and associated Bylaw considerations, all of which will need to be studied further by City staff. For instance, a review of relevant bylaws (e.g., Fees & Charges, Parks & Open Spaces, and Subdivision and Development Services [SDS]) is needed to identify any required amendments aligned with the recommendations in this report.

An associated level of administrative oversight will also be required. GIS and administrative tracking requirements are to be factored in to ensure proper asset management and long-term program coordination. Online tools — such as a map of current bench locations — can also be considered to complement any future Donation Program applications.



Existing benches at Simms Park.



Existing bench along the Courtenay River.

💡 *Benches and seating are not just objects; they are mirrors to our social behavior.* 💡
(Social Life Project, 2021)



Appendix A

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